

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF

**CT SENATE BILL # 207: AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR A LYME
DISEASE PREVENTION AND EDUCATION PROGRAM.**

Submitted by: Melissa Cunningham, South Windsor, CT

Dear Members of the Committee on Children:

I strongly encourage you to support proposed Senate Bill # 207 which seeks funding to implement a statewide Lyme Disease public awareness campaign based on the existing BLAST model and provide for trained regional educators.

My interest in this legislation stems from my own experience with Lyme and other tick-borne illnesses. Unfortunately, I fell into the category of individuals who do not develop the typical "bulls-eye" rash and/or return positive Lyme test results. Years of mild, seemingly unrelated and undiagnosed symptoms culminated in eight months of acute illness which even prevented me from working at times. Even while exhibiting severe and debilitating symptoms and visiting countless specialists across Connecticut and New York, I spent months being misdiagnosed and/or undiagnosed. Today, I consider myself lucky that I was able to find an ILADS (International Lyme and Associated Diseases Society) trained doctor within a day's drive from my home. A year's worth of treatment for Lyme and several other co-infections (largely unreimbursed by insurance) has made a huge difference in my functioning and quality of life, but the physical, financial and emotional toll cannot be overstated.

Prior to becoming acutely ill, I worked two jobs, was renovating my newly purchased home and was an avid hiker, gardener, camper and enjoyed being outdoors as much as possible. While I had a cursory knowledge of Lyme Disease, it wasn't until I was ill that I began to understand the complexities of it and all other tick-borne infections. Even though controversy surrounds the diagnosis and treatment of Lyme and tick-borne infections, we should all be able to agree that knowledge about its transmission and individual vigilance will go a long way in preventing new cases of infection. Even in a time of competing demands for limited resources, I truly believe the funds spent to prevent new cases of infection will benefit both individuals and society tenfold in the future.

Thank you for your consideration.